

Section 1.0 Administration Subsection 1.9 Complaint Investigations	Page 1 of 1 Revised May 2008
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Complaint Investigations

It is common to receive a wide variety of complaints related to environmental public health issues involving possible health hazards. Some of these complaints will be in areas that you have regulatory oversight and must respond to the complainants concerns. These may include complaints involving sewage disposal, food establishments, food processors, lodging establishments, food products and water. Other complaints will be ones that you will have to refer the complainant to other agencies and no further action will be required. The type of response will depend on the complaint received. In many cases, receipt of a complaint involving a facility that you have regulatory oversight of should result in a visit to that facility to determine the validity of the complaint. Before investigating a complaint, it is important to do a file review and see when the last inspection was made and what violations were recorded. If the complaint alleges conditions noted in the previous inspection, and they could pose an imminent health risk, a full inspection may be necessary. Of course, inspectors are not required to respond to complaints about non-regulatory problems at a facility, such as poor customer service.

Investigations of complaints are to be initiated within a period of time as suggested below:

1. Complaints that involve an imminent health hazard should be investigated upon receipt;
2. Complaints that involve a potential health hazard should be investigated within five (5) working days of receipt; and
3. Complaints or requests that involve only nuisance conditions such as hair in food at a food establishment or hair on a bed at a lodging facility should be investigated within (15) working days.

All complaints which you receive that involve facilities or products where you have regulatory oversight must be logged and documented. The information that needs to be recorded on a complaint log includes the nature of the complaint, investigation results, action taken and final outcome. A model complaint log sheet and report form may be found in section 1.10 Forms for you to use if your agency does not already have a complaint report form developed.

The Section of this manual related to onsite sewage has a subsection that discusses handling and working complaints related to malfunctioning existing onsite sewage system. For further guidance on response to these complaints refer to the onsite sewage section of this manual.